

# NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Boston U. vs Minnesota

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Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

## Boston U. Terriers Coach Jay Pandolfo

Semifinal Media Conference



### Q. Your thoughts as we head into Tampa.

COACH PANDOLFO: We're really looking forward to it. I'm really, really happy and proud of our team, the way they've come into this year, the leadership group we have. We have a great mix of veteran players and clearly we have a great group of young players. And they've come together.

And they've worked together and we found our game again in the last month or so. I'm really proud of them. Went through a little bit of a stretch there in mid February. We weren't at our best. We've come out the other side. And one of our team's goals at the beginning of the year was to get to the Frozen Four and see what happens there.

And I give our guys a ton of credit. It's been a lot of fun coaching these guys. And, like I said, really proud of them.

### Q. First-year head coach and you've got probably one of the best freshman in the country in Lane Hutson. What have you seen about his growth? What's impressed you most about his game? And what are some of the things that we might not notice about him beyond the points?

COACH PANDOLFO: I think, number one, he's had one of the best freshmen seasons ever for a defenseman. What stands out every day is his competitiveness not just offensively. I think we all see that, but how hard he competes defensively and how he's grown his game defensively.

I thought the start of the year he had to learn a little bit, like his gaps weren't great. He didn't close quick enough defensively. His stick maybe wasn't great.

He's improved in all those areas and he's the type of player and type of kid and type of competitor that he's going to get

better every single time he steps on the ice. Every day he does a lot of video work. He cares so much about winning.

And he has some incredible individual accomplishments this year. But at the end of the day, the kid just wants to win. So I've been so impressed with that with Lane.

### Q. How important has the presence of Quinn been for his brother, Lane, this season? And would you happen to have any examples to share that maybe you witnessed during the course of the season?

COACH PANDOLFO: I think that you can tell that they're really close. I think it's always special to be able to play with your older brother. And I think Quinn looks out for him. Quinn's a competitive kid as well.

We've had some incidents this year on the ice where we try to keep those two away from each other. I can see those two, I'm sure, when they were younger going at it. But they're very competitive. They push each other. They care about each other.

So I think it's been special for those two guys to have the opportunity to play together. And they've had a ton of success as freshmen and it's nice to see.

### Q. Curious with being a first-year head coach, what does it take to sort of build your program in a long-term sense towards the future while also being hyper-competitive with the present and good enough to make it to the Frozen Four in year one?

COACH PANDOLFO: I think you're always -- for me taking over this job, I tried to look back at my experience at BU and want to try to get the culture right that I felt it was like when I was here, just the competitiveness of the players, the team-first mentality. All these little things that you want to continue to grow.

And I think the other part is, I think, BU and a lot of these schools, you've had kids that are maybe here only one or two years, and I think it's difficult to build a program that way.

It was important this year -- we had 11 seniors; I think it's unheard of at BU. That's part of it. And hopefully that continues moving forward. The guys aren't in such a rush to move on.

And certain players, they're ready and they have nothing else to prove at the college level. If it's time for them to go, it's time for them to go. But I think for the most part you want to have guys that want to stay and build a culture and keep the program and the tradition going.

**Q. Any scouting report on the Gophers? I know it's early, have you look at them much? My other question, going back to your time as a player, some great games in history between BU and Minnesota in the Frozen Four. But twice you ended Minnesota's season once in St. Paul and once in Providence. Just your memories of that as a player?**

COACH PANDOLFO: I've watched them this year, over the course of the year this year. Minnesota, they're a heck of a team. Obviously high-powered offense. I don't think we want to get into a track meet with them, the way they play in transition. And we certainly have to be aware of the top line they have.

But they have a ton of depth below that as well. Their D core is excellent. We know they're a great team. There's a reason they've been No. 1 in the country all year long.

The memories, playing them in the past, I know the BU-Minnesota rivalry in the '70s was huge. And a lot of those guys played together on the '80 Olympic team.

But I don't remember it being a huge rival with us when I played. I was fortunate to be on the winning side of games against them, but I don't remember a huge rivalry. But it's two incredible programs, tradition, and it should be a lot of fun.

**Q. On Drew, felt maybe he's had some ups and downs, especially establishing consistency in the goal his first couple of years, but it looks like he's been playing the best hockey of his career these last few weeks. What have you seen from him taking that step?**

COACH PANDOLFO: Drew, no question, through the course of the season, he wasn't as consistent as he would like to be. It's something that he's kind of addressed. Him and I have talked about it.

But the last month he's been excellent. I think it's about that consistency. He seems very calm in the net. He has confidence and a bit of swagger to his game. And I think goaltenders need that. They have to have some of that.

He's shown that. And we're happy the way he's playing right now.

He's been a big reasons why we're at where we're at. And I'm really proud of him, how he's handled it and how he's built his game over the course of the year.

**Q. Obviously drafted guys like Lane that get a lot of the headlines. But Skoog and Brown have obviously had career years. What have you seen from them to set themselves apart, especially with potential undrafted contracts coming up?**

COACH PANDOLFO: Both those guys came back motivated to have really good seasons. Their preparation in the summertime was to come back and have great years. And they prepared themselves to do that. And give both of them a lot of credit, not just for their own individual accomplishments either. They wanted to come back and have a chance to win. So that's the bigger part.

And those two guys have had tremendous years. Skoog got off to little bit of a slow start because he had an injury in the summer that he was getting over, but once he started feeling healthy and got his legs under him, he's had a tremendous second half.

And Matt Brown, he's been arguably our best forward all year (indiscernible). Give him a lot of credit. Those guys have been huge for us.

**Q. You obviously went to a lot of Frozen Fours as a player. What type of advice would you give to the players?**

COACH PANDOLFO: Number one is I think they should be proud of the accomplishment and they should enjoy it. But also understand that it's a very difficult tournament to win. I was very fortunate to be able to participate in four of them as a player but we only won one. That tells you how hard it is. And we have some really good teams.

But the margin for error in each game is slim. You have to make sure you're dialed in and you're ready to play the right way and you have to limit your mistakes. The biggest thing is you really can't beat yourself. That's the most important thing.

Our guys, we've been through some tough games recently. So hopefully that helps us going into this tournament.

**Q. Any words of wisdom from Coach Parker yet, Jay?**

COACH PANDOLFO: He's been great. We talk on a regular basis. I know he'll be down there. The support

he's given me since I got this job has been tremendous. He's meant so much to me.

I played for him for four years. I had so much respect for him. So I listen to whatever he says.

But the support overall we've gotten from the school, from alumni, from the athletic department has been huge. Everyone right now is excited to be part of it and we really appreciate the support we're getting from everyone.

**Q. As I was making my way Saturday night after the game down to the bowels of the arena I was walking along with Jack Parker. I wanted to ask what was that moment like when he made his way into the locker room and you already referenced from alums, but have you heard from teammates, from your teammates at BU and just the reaction around campus?**

COACH PANDOLFO: It was special to see Coach come in the room after the game and congratulate myself and the team and the coaching staff. It meant a lot to all of us. We know what he did for this program for four years.

Yeah, former players, there's a bunch going down to Tampa. They're all excited. The support they've given is really incredible. They're excited to go down.

The support around the school has been tremendous. It's been a lot of fun. And I think people are excited. I think for BU hockey, it's kind of the expectations at times. I know they're high expectations, but that's what you want, especially with a program like this.

**Q. You guys have already played in an NHL rink four times this year, six times counting Mullett. How much does that prepare you to play in Amalie? And how do you make sure the spectacle of the weekend doesn't get in the way of play?**

COACH PANDOLFO: We're used to playing in them. We played at the Garden four times. I think our guys are used to the environment. The Beanpot alone, I know it's a mid-year tournament, but you're playing in front of 17,000 people. I think our guys have experienced it.

I think it helps going into a tournament like this. So we're excited about it. I know our guys are ready for it.

And I think yeah, it's a pressure situation we're going into. But I think our guys have done a good job of handling each moment. And that's the same mindset we'll have going into this -- just enjoy it. Can't look too far ahead. Just worry about your first shift and having fun.

**Q. Wilmer Skoog didn't play much in the third period against Cornell. Fensore (indiscernible) was out during the (indiscernible) championships. What do you anticipate their availability to look like in Tampa?**

COACH PANDOLFO: The good thing is we have 10 days before we play. I'm not sure if Zabaneh will be back or not. This time of year I think all teams are dealing with little injuries here and there. And I think most of the time players are going to try to do whatever they can to play.

So we won't know what our lineup looks like probably almost right up until next Thursday. So I anticipate some guys are going to get healthier over the course of the next 10 days. And I'm not exactly positive on Zabaneh yet. But he'll try to do everything that he can to play. And we'll see how it plays out.

**Q. One of these big storylines this whole tournament has been how stacked and loaded the Big Ten is, and you've seen how they've performed throughout the tournament. And now the only time you guys matched up against the Big Ten team this year when you played Michigan back in October. I wanted to ask, like, what kind of did you learn about your team in that series that you can bring into the matchup here against Minnesota and beyond?**

COACH PANDOLFO: That was a long time ago. We played them the second week of the season. Obviously the first game against Michigan did not go very well. We got basically killed that game.

But we responded the second game and it was a great college hockey game. We understand that obviously with the scores of the Big Ten games in the first round of the NCAAs that they've put up some big numbers there. All the teams have a high-powered offense. And like I said, I don't think we want to get into a track meet with Minnesota.

So we have to make sure that we're playing our game. And I think I've talked about it before, but that's one thing we really focus on is our own game. And we want to make sure details and our structure and all those things are ready to go on Thursday.

**Q. You played a couple of times at Amalie Arena back when it was the Ice Palace, back when it was St. Pete Times Forum. With Florida being an unconventional market for hockey, is there anything with either the ice or the boards or the arena itself that you're letting your players know might be a little different?**

COACH PANDOLFO: Not really. The warm weather places, they're used to keeping the ice conditions good.

And I don't think there's anything you really have to worry about. I just tell the guys to bring some shorts. It's going to be nice weather down there. It's the same. And once you get inside a rink you're ready to play hockey. I don't think it matters where it's at.

**Q. You've talked all season about how depth is a strengths of this team. This past weekend it was Ethan Phillips who stepped up and shine what can you say about Phillips and the depth of this team going into the Frozen Four?**

COACH PANDOLFO: Well, the depth, it's no question it's been a strength of ours over the course of the season. We can roll four lines that can all contribute. We can roll D that can all contribute. So that's been the strength of our team.

Like I said earlier, we have a big upper class and we also have some young guys that have contributed huge for us this year. So we have a lot of depth.

Ethan Phillips, really happy the way he played this week. Really happy for him. He was injured there at the end of the first half. Missed over two months. So takes a while to come back from that. So I think it took him a little bit to get his legs under him.

And I give him a lot of credit. I think I mentioned it the other day but he went into the playoffs as, we usually dress 13 forwards. He was probably the 13th forward going into it. But he just wanted to be part of it. He wanted to do whatever he could to help the team.

This time of year, things are going to happen. Guys are going to get injured. You need to be ready when you get your opportunity. And he prepared himself and he was ready. He took advantage of it. So I give him a lot of credit. Really happy for him -- great teammate, great player, great kid.

**Q. In the first round, you guys defeated Western Michigan pretty handily and they have one of the top lines in college hockey. What made you guys so successful against them? And how will you take that going into playing against Cooley, Knies and Snuggerud against the Gophers?**

COACH PANDOLFO: I think it's just a group effort. You have to be aware when those guys are on the ice. I think the big thing for us is make sure you manage the puck. Know who you're out there against, try to take away time and space.

They're highly talented, especially -- both teams, but the Minnesota line, I think, is arguably the best line in the

country.

You always have to make sure we're aware of them when they're on the ice and try to make it hard on them. You don't want to get into an up-and-down game when they're on the ice. You have to make sure you manage the puck. When it's time to put it in deep, make them come 200 feet. It's a lot harder like that, instead of turning pucks over in the neutral zone and letting them transition. That's when it gets difficult against talented players.

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