

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Denver vs Boston College

Friday, April 12, 2024

St. Paul, Minnesota, USA

Xcel Energy Center

Boston College Eagles

Coach Greg Brown

Will Smith

Eamon Powell

Gabe Perreault

Finals Pregame Media Conference



EAMON POWELL: I think it was the third game of the year. They play a fast transition game. They're a skilled team, just like us I feel like. It should be a great test to see how far we've come as a team from the start of the year.

Like I said, they have a lot of skill, they can make you pay in the power-play. We're really looking forward to it.

GABE PERREAULT: He said it pretty well. Obviously I think they're the team that scored the most goals in college hockey this season. They have a good offense, but also a really good defense. It's going to be a really good battle.

Q. The chemistry going back. Those first games together, what were they like when you were developing chemistry? How did that process happen and how quick was it?

WILL SMITH: I think at the national team, obviously your first year you're kind of jumbling lines, it's more about development. We would be together one game, then another we would be completely separated.

I think our 18 year is when it really started to gel, we were solidified as a line. From there we kind of ran with it. We haven't really been separated since.

GABE PERREAULT: Yeah, I think he said it well. We clicked together pretty well, pretty click. That was the thing. Played quite a bit of college games last year, and the 18 year. So that kind of made the transition easier for this year, as well.

Q. Will, you guys outlast Michigan Tech, you come from behind against Quinnipiac. You blank Michigan. Three different types of wins. How will those experiences pay off for tomorrow night?

WILL SMITH: We said we can win any type of game. We take pride in that. If we play a 1-0 game or high-scoring game, we'll be there

We knew coming into this tournament was going to be a battle. We didn't know what we were going to get from each team. We have one more to go. Denver is a very

THE MODERATOR: We'll start off with an opening statement from coach.

GREG BROWN: We're very happy to be here. It's not an easy road. So many quality hockey teams in college hockey. To be one of the two teams left standing at the end is a great compliment to these guys, how much work they've put in, the effort for the entire season, all summer. They do so many things, they do it willingly and without knowing if they'll be rewarded with the opportunity to play in this game.

We're very happy to have that opportunity and can't wait for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Gabe and Will, you guys committed to BC with Ryan. You are one game away from completing the vision. How does it feel to be one game away from completing that vision?

GABE PERREAULT: Yeah, I think it's kind of what we dreamed of coming in. That was the goal coming in. We knew we were going to have a good team. We had a pretty good season so far. Super excited for tomorrow.

WILL SMITH: Gabe said it. That was our goal coming in here, to win. We have a shot at it. I think now we have the opportunity, we're going to give our best shot at it.

Q. What were your impressions of Denver when you saw them in October? What did you learn from that?



high offensive team. We're ready for anything.

Q. Not a lot to do between now and 5:00 tomorrow. How excited are you for Cutter?

EAMON POWELL: Yeah, obviously we're very excited for him. He deserves all the accolades he's gotten this year. I think it's 38 goals this year. It's absolutely crazy. He's been awesome. His mindset going into this year, it was never about just him or his personal goals, it was always about the team and helping the team win. I think that's what all the teammates kind of look up to him for.

He's a big voice in the locker room, for how special a player he is, but he's a great teammate as well. Everyone will be rooting him on and just very excited for him because he deserves it.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach Brown.

Q. You get a line that's basically formed. Barring injury, was there ever a point in the season where you looked at your lineup and said, Maybe if we split 'em up, maybe we get some benefit, let's try it?

GREG BROWN: It happened in game a few times, but their chemistry and the way they read each other makes their, when they're together, they're kind of bigger than the sum of the parts. Yeah, they just have a real feel for each other and where they're going to be.

We didn't put them together the first two weeks of practice in September. We tried 'em a whole different kind of combinations. One day we did throw them together, and I was like, Whoa.

Yeah, you don't know, one, how quickly they'll adjust to college hockey. Two, can three 18-year-old freshmen handle it? We knew they could generate offense. Defensively we weren't sure if they could handle it against bigger, stronger, older guys.

Again, the way they read each other offensively, they also have that same feel defensively. It may not look like textbook defensively, but they understand what each other is doing and cover for each other in maybe not a traditional way, but they do a great job without the puck, as well.

Q. (No microphone.)

GREG BROWN: It wasn't immediate, but I would say probably between games 5 and 10 you saw they really had a feel and they were being responsible. One, they weren't getting scored on or even giving up a ton of chances,

which was going to be our biggest fear. You didn't know if they'd score three and give up the other team four, which would be no recipe for us.

It wasn't like that. Consistently they were more chances for than against every game so we knew we could rely on them. They've become more and more reliable as the season's gone on.

Q. You played these guys in October. Watching them now, the way they've played defensively, that seems to be their biggest improvement or strength? How do you counter that as you watch them on tape here?

GREG BROWN: Yeah, they're hard to open up. They really play well as a team defensively. They seem like, watching last night, they're moving as a group of 5 all over the ice. There's not a lot of free space, they're not spread out. They do a great job of getting numbers around the puck. We know we're going to have to play with a lot of pace and change sides and try and open up some free ice. They do a great job, like I said, of taking that away quickly.

The game in October was an exciting, great hockey game. Dave and I talked this morning about, we said, Well, if we can both have good seasons, maybe we'll see each other again, so... It's kind of exciting that that happened.

Q. You have a couple players on your roster that came from the transfer portal, but not too many. Your recruiting, coaching philosophy on the portal?

GREG BROWN: Yeah, it's still growing. It's new. We have three grad transfers, which is a little different. That will dry up a lot after next year with the COVID years ending.

The normal transfer portal seems to be growing each season. Yeah, we're going to have to discuss, do you save scholarships for that and stuff? Right now we haven't. We've been filling up our team more in the traditional way, then adding some grad transfers.

You can see there's been some high-profile transfers this year. I suspect that will be pretty consistent in the years going forward, so...

It's something all teams have to consider. College hockey I think right now, with the grads and the extra year, is as deep as it's ever been that I've seen. Just our team adding those three grad guys, a totally different team than if you have three more freshmen. They have such experience and are so reliable. I think you see that around the whole country.

With the transfer portal, you can change the outlook of your team very quickly. That's something you have to be aware of or you'll be left behind.

Q. Talent aside, how have you created a culture this year that has allowed the freshmen to make an impact from day one?

GREG BROWN: Yeah, all the credit goes to the older guys on the team. They're the ones that bring the freshmen in and make them feel welcome and make them feel comfortable, excited to be in the locker room and to play. Some old school teams, the freshmen had to earn their stripes, not hazing, but just they had to break their way into the locker room.

If they're uncomfortable walking in, they don't want to ruffle any feathers, they're probably not going to play their best. I give our older guys a ton of credit for bringing them in, incorporating them right away and letting them be excited and go out and perform like they have.

Q. What has Cutter meant to your team? As for you as a second-year head coach, to have a hat trick finalist, what does that mean?

GREG BROWN: It's obviously been huge for our team. The thing I was excited about this year, like, last year Cutter was outstanding, but it was mostly in an offensively form. He scored and created points. This year he's a complete player. He penalty kills this year, plays against the other team's top line. Many nights he's taking big faceoffs at critical times, defensive faceoffs.

He's expanded his game to be an asset every time we put him out in whatever role we put him out in. He's very deserving to be a Hobey finalist. We hope he wins clearly. The 38 goals is so impressive. To be able to score like that and do those other jobs to help us win other games, too, has been enormous for us.

Q. I've seen Jerry York walking around St. Paul this weekend. How much have you spoken to him? What type of advice has he given to you about the entire tournament?

GREG BROWN: We had dinner Tuesday night when we got here with the team. He came. He's always so supportive and will shoot encouraging texts or calls or whatever.

As far as advice, he's been an open book the whole two years. It's not new. It's not like he's jumping back in as we get to the tournament. But spending 14 years and having the opportunity to be at these Frozen Fours several times

with him, I picked up a lot, so...

Q. (No microphone.)

GREG BROWN: Oh, God (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Must have said something.

GREG BROWN: You mean specifically this week?

Q. Yes.

GREG BROWN: No, I mean. No, it's a the normal stuff.

THE MODERATOR: Anything that stands out in general?

GREG BROWN: When we went before, when he was the head coach, it was so important to stay true to our identity and be our best version of ourselves rather than trying to recreate your game depending on your opponent.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

GREG BROWN: Thanks.

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