

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Denver vs Western Michigan

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Enterprise Center

Western Michigan Broncos Coach Pat Ferschweiler Hampton Slukynsky

Alex Bump

Tim Washe

Semifinal Pregame Media Conference



MODERATOR: All right. Welcome to the Western Michigan Broncos. Coach Pat Ferschweiler named coach of the year. Congratulations and opening thoughts back in St. Louis. A little different this time, I guess.

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Yeah, we're excited and proud of what we accomplished so far this year with the full knowledge that we have a game to play and mission at hand to win Thursday night's game.

MODERATOR: All right, questions.

Q. Hey, Coach. I just wanted to ask you about the program. Can you kind of describe the culture and the excitement that is your program as you head into the Frozen Four?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: What we have done in the program is start off with great people. That's how you're allowed to overachieve your talent. We love to recruit kids with inner drive, that love to come to the rink and love hockey. You guys might be thinking everybody loves hockey. That's not true. Some play because they're good at it. Some play because they like it. Our players love hockey, love to come to the rink and they love to work hard. That's our basic culture. We keep it simple. We come to the rink and we like doing it every day. They like each other. It's a very tight-knit group.

MODERATOR: You guys like hockey? All right. Good. What else we got here for the players?

Q. I guess this is for Tim. What's it mean to have this program here making it first Frozen Four appearance

after having some success over the last previous three years?

TIM WASHE: Yeah, it's a huge deal. Winning two games in regionals is tough. We have been there in the tournament, had some success a couple years back but it feels great breaking through there and getting a chance to compete here.

Q. Again for Tim, the success that you've had over Denver this year going 2-0-1 and playing them tight, how much might that help boost confidence? I know I asked Pat during his conference call last week, but what confidence carryover might it be for this team going up against Denver?

TIM WASHE: Yeah, it's nice going against a team you know. Played them three times now. They're an incredible team, well-coached. They lay hard. We know what to expect. We've had successful game plans against them. We're just going to look to repeat the good stuff and work on the things we need to.

Q. This is for Alex and Tim. I wanted to see if you can say what you appreciate the most about each other's games.

ALEX BUMP: That he can just play a full 200-foot game, most reliable in college hockey back there in the defensive zone. That's what I admire about his game.

TIM WASHE: I mean, the biggest thing, I think it's just impressive how no one can take the puck from Al. He's big, strong, he can skate, great shot. He wants that puck on his stick and he makes great plays with it so I admire that about him.

MODERATOR: All right Hammer. Why don't you comment on your teammates' games?

HAMPTON SLUKYNSKY: T over here just really solid two-way player. Love when he's on the ice. You know he'll help us out back there and have things in control and Then bumper, just the way he creates. It looks like he has nothing, but the way he can make plays and finish is

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unreal.

Q. Couple players you've been around, Cole Eiserman, can you tell me about his shot? Also, what do you think about his shot and also Cole Hudson, what makes him different than other D?

HAMPTON SLUKYNSKY: Sure, Cole Eiserman's shot. You see it every game. You can see his stick bend in real-time when he's shooting so he's got a really quick release, really hard shot and really accurate too. So, yeah, tough to stop for sure and Cole Hudson I think just how dynamic he is on the blue line, you see him making guys break their ankles and going down there from there so I think those two things for sure.

Q. Alex, I wonder if you can take us into the mindset of the team going through this for the first time. Has anything been surprising for getting here, being here, going on the ice here, anything like that?

ALEX BUMP: No, I mean, I think we're just happy to be here. We're trying not to focus too much on little things. Clear mind, focus just on hockey right now, trying to win two hockey games right now. Don't really worry about that other stuff.

MODERATOR: Anybody been up in the arch?

TIM WASHE: Not that I know of yet.

PAT FERSCHWEILER: I have.

MODERATOR: Did you like it?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: The ride up and the ride down are a little dicy, but some tight quarters for a big fella (laughter). Once you're up there it's fine.

Q. Tim, I wanted to ask you what would a checkup mean to the Western Michigan hockey community? Can you put that into words?

TIM WASHE: Yeah, it would be huge. It's what you play for at the start of the year and throughout. It would mean everything, yeah, just complete dominance of the league, but, yeah. We got a great support system, program, and school that are behind us and community, so, yeah, we're excited to try to get the job done for them.

Q. For us that have never been there, can you kind of describe what the hockey community is like? I know there are local bars and restaurants, fervent fans. How would you describe it to someone who has never been there?

TIM WASHE: Yeah, when we're playing, the games are always on the TVs there. We have a lot of fans inside the rink, right? But those who can't make it are always watching at all the bars, what have it, but, yeah, just a big following. We drive around when we were back this week, they got Frozen Four Broncos signs all over so it's cool to see the support we have.

MODERATOR: Where is the go-to spot? What is "the" spot.

TIM WASHE: We have a few. The Old Goat Tavern, though.

MODERATOR: All right, good.

Q. Pat seems to agree.

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Solid answer.

Q. What does it feel like, the reception is... the number says it, you're the only number one seed still left in this field. You have the most wins, you won the only championship of the four teams, do you feel like the favorites here and what does that mean?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: To feel like a favorite against Denver, the defending national champions, a team with a known quantity coming into the year, returning with much of their lineup, I don't want to go favorite or not there but what we are is confident in ourselves. We're confident in each other and we're confident in what we do every single day and what we're trying to accomplish, so in that way, we do have confident in ourselves.

Q. Pat, I wonder what you have done to try to keep this a normal experience going to play a game tomorrow or do you want them to appreciate everything that's different about a Frozen Four having never taken part in one?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Yeah, this is a big-time experience. I think they should enjoy every second of it and just playing college athletics in general is supposed to be fun. We try to have fun every single day and smile as we come to the rink, but I think the super power of this team so far this year has been able to stay in the moment, 100% every day right here. That means create practices, singular focus on Thursday's game, not get ahead of ourselves and certainly not look back because we know we can't change the past. Being present is a great thing for this team and we're going to continue to do that.

MODERATOR: I forgot to introduce Marvin to all you, the



official Frozen Four media mascot if you didn't know. You can take selfies with him.

Q. Hampton you mentioned a dynamic defenseman you've play with in Cole Hudson and you have played against Zeev Buium, too. You've played against him. What's unique about him and what stands out the most when you're around him in big games?

HAMPTON SLUKYNSKY: Yeah, Hudson, just how dynamic he is at the blue line and making guys miss and coming downhill from there. I think if we just take away his time in space and force him to his back end, I think we can contain him from there.

MODERATOR: Have you heard from Coach Wilkinson or Coach Culhane or others that came before you who helped set this up?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: There's lots of great people in hockey. So many people have reached out and given their well-wishes so it's great to hear, all the former coaches have reached out for sure. Coach Wilkinson was my head coach at Western Michigan. It's great to hear from all the alum.

Q. For Hampton, I'm wondering if you and your brother Grant have had a chance to reflect on th last year. This time a year ago, you were part of a different directional Michigan program. What has this last year been like for the two of you guys?

HAMPTON SLUKYNSKY: Yeah, I think we're just staying in the present and focusing on the last week here and it's been crazy. We were both going to Northern Michigan and everything kind of happened there. We were really fortunate to find a great spot here at Western. We're happy we came here, obviously, and it's been great.

Q. Tim, talk about your 200-foot game, you have worked on things in the face-off circle too. How have you seen that develop over the last two years and what's the biggest step you have taken in your game this year?

TIM WASHE: We have amazing coaches and teammates I have been able to play with helped me learn a lot about the game and both zones there, but, yeah, just try to make strides each year, try to be physical this both areas and, yeah, just make plays with the puck when they're on my stick. That's about it.

Q. Alex, for you, getting to practice against Hampton and Rosie all year long, how has that made you better?

ALEX BUMP: Yeah, they're great goaltenders. They challenge you like all goalies should. It's not easy to score on them, obviously, which you can tell from Hampton. Just trying to get my release quicker and trying to catch them off guard has improved my game this year.

Q. Pat, for you, you have always followed up wanting to play your game and play your style but now you have Denver again. Will you do things differently?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Tim mentioned it earlier, we have had successes against Denver so we're going to try to repeat the things we did well, make them defend us when possible and try to reattack as fast as possible and then we're going to try to correct some of the things we need to correct. They can overpower you with their offense at times. They're well-coached and well-organized as anyone in the country so it should be a great, great battle. If you're a college hockey fan, you have the two top-scoring teams in the country, both playing fast, both try to score. Both are loaded with future NHL players. Should be a great game.

MODERATOR: Is that somebody's phone going off? That would be an early \$50 fine. I don't know. There's a \$50 fine if phones go off and it goes to charity. What's for dinner tonight?

TIM WASHE: I think a big steak.

MODERATOR: All right. The usual. Barbecue, stake? Good? All right. How we doing? Anything else out there, gang? All right.

Q. I know you talk about the players enjoying the moment, all of that sort of stuff. Have you talked to any other coaches about getting to Frozen Fours and the experience and maybe what you want to take away from the experience yourself as a coach?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: I did make a few calls to some coaches I respect a great deal who have been to Frozen Fours in the past and things that worked for them and certainly try to get some advice that way as we're always trying to get better and make our program better, but they had some nice pieces of wisdom. Most of the wisdom was enjoy the moment and I think that's a great way to look at it and something we've never done before but even if it's something we had done before, you're still supposed to lean in and enjoy this moment. We're a fully prepared team. I say it all the time. Nerves are for the unprepared. This team is prepared. We practice every day. We come to the rink to work every day. We believe in ourselves. We can look around and enjoy the moment while we're here.

Q. Pat, have you been able to lean on Jason Herter



this week? That's someone in your program that's got experience, obviously. What's he meant to this whole building process to getting you guys here?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: He's really meant everything. Jason has been one of my best friends for about 25 or 30 years. I don't want to age myself too much there. It's literally like having two head coaches in the program. The guy has massive experience, seems to only win wherever he goes. He's truly a glue guy as far as bringing locker rooms together and creating culture. Every Tuesday, he cooks lunch for the entire team. Little things like that are appreciated that he certainly puts a lot of hours into and just takes care of us. His hockey knowledge is off the charts. He's a world-class recruiter and even that, he's a world-class human and we're very lucky to have him on our side.

MODERATOR: What was on the menu the last Tuesday he cooked? Was that yesterday?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Yesterday was day off, but he has an array... it can be pork chops, perogis, his homemade chili. The boys kind of order by the end of the year what they want. It all seems to be good because they eat it all for sure.

MODERATOR: Tim's what's number one?

TIM WASHE: The homemade chili is legit for sure.

MODERATOR: I love it. We have had a vote and the results are in. He probably already knows.

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Staff would probably vote his homemade perogis but it's one and two. It's tight.

Q. For all the players, what has... give me one thing that's stood out to you about Jason Herter. Pat just called him a co-head coach what has stood out to you guys?

ALEX BUMP: Yeah, I think the world-class human being he is, just like our whole coaching staff. They care about you off the ice just as much as on the ice.

HAMPTON SLUKYNSKY: Yeah, his knowledge for the game, some of the things I have heard hem talk about are things I have never thought of or heard.

TIM WASHE: Yeah, what these guys said, knowledge of the game, just a world-class human being and he's still got it, too. He had the game winner today in practice (laughter).

MODERATOR: All right. It looks like we're good. Guys, thank you very much. Best of luck.

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