

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Denver vs Western Michigan

Thursday, April 10, 2025

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Enterprise Center

Western Michigan Broncos Coach Pat Ferschweiler Hampton Slukynsky Owen Michaels

Semifinal Postgame Media Conference



Western Michigan - 3, Denver - 2 (2OT)

PAT FERSCHWEILER: I thought that game was as advertised, a heavyweight battle. Obviously Denver has a championship pedigree and they weren't going to go down easy. They pushed back in the third.

But I thought our team responded with belief and execution in that overtime. And I thought we deserved the win in the overtime.

Q. Talk us through that play and the emotions.

OWEN MICHAELS: Blacked out a little. It was kind of a little bit of a broken play, just saw the puck squirt out to me. I was in the middle of the ice and had some open time and space and figured I'd put it on net. And pretty happy it went in.

Q. What goes through your mind? Looked like you froze for a second.

OWEN MICHAELS: You're right, I did. Just happy, excited.

Q. Owen, safe to say that's the biggest goal you've scored in your career?

OWEN MICHAELS: Absolutely.

Q. Have you ever scored an overtime goal in your career?

OWEN MICHAELS: Probably back in youth hockey. This tops that.

Q. Hampton, as you're watching the game unfold and the commitment to defending by your teammates tonight, what were you thinking?

HAMPTON SLUKYNSKY: I thought we were unreal defensively all night. I don't know how many shots they had after the second, but it didn't feel like too many. Sometimes it's tough to stay in there. But just trying to stay mentally dialed and be ready for when the shots come.

Q. Owen, last year you had two goals as a freshman. This year I think that makes 18. What do you attribute that difference to? Was it something the coaches work with you on, a tip or anything? Or just what in your development do you attribute that to?

OWEN MICHAELS: For sure. Definitely went into the summer trying to take that next step. And had a big summer in the gym and on the ice. It helps playing for the best coaching staff in college hockey. Just love showing up at the rink every day and putting in the work.

Q. Anything specific they taught you or told you to work on?

OWEN MICHAELS: Just play Bronco hockey, put it on net and play north, play fast.

Q. Hampton, you weren't called to make a whole lot of saves in the first two periods, but came up with some big ones in the third in overtime. How did you stay ready for that?

HAMPTON SLUKYNSKY: Like I said, just staying present. Not worrying about the next five minutes, just trying to stay in the moment. And just kind of telling myself, be ready for the next shot, take it one shot at a time. That's how I handle those situations.

Q. Owen, talk about the domination you had over the first two periods? Was it hard to regroup after going into that overtime because you controlled most of the match?

OWEN MICHAELS: No, we just knew we had to put our



foot on the gas. We knew they would push from the third. They're a hell of a team. We were expecting it, we were ready for it.

Going into overtime we were just talking about the belief, we're not going to lack that. We haven't all year and that's not going to change.

Q. No magic words from Coach between the first and second OT?

OWEN MICHAELS: This is our game. This is our game, so we're going to go out and win, take it.

Q. Owen, you guys have had a lot of double-OT games recently. Has that kind of conditioned you to be able to play this long?

OWEN MICHAELS: Yeah, definitely I think it goes back to the work we put in every week on the gym, on the ice. And we have the confidence and belief in ourselves that we're prepared for these games, whether it's three periods, four periods or five in some cases these past couple of weeks. But, yeah, we're ready for it.

Q. Owen, what's it like to go against Matty Davis when he's doing some of the stuff he does? And you'll be glad to wish him goodbye at some point.

OWEN MICHAELS: He's a heck of a goaltender. Not too fun playing against him. His resumé speaks for itself. He's a winner. He keeps it nice and stable back there for their team. He's not much fun playing against.

Q. Maybe you have something more than Owen to share with me. A lot of your forwards obviously developed ever since you've been here in a similar way. Is it a natural progression, or is there something specific with Owen you needed to work with him on?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: What we see often is -- Owen's play was better than his point totals last year. So we saw offense in him. He did have a huge summer in the gym. So he's stronger. That gym just allows your skills to show, right? And we talked about that.

But also getting him to really believe in himself as an offensive player, push him forward, play with Alex Bump. These are good things, right? But a lot of the credit goes into the work he put in in the summer.

Again, it wasn't as big as a jump as it looks on paper. He had very good quality of play last year. The points didn't follow, but the quality of play was there.

Q. When your team kind of blows a 2-0 lead going to overtime facing a team like Denver, they're used to be here, how do you keep your team focused and energized going into that second overtime?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: It's a focused group. They never lose belief in themselves. They came in unhappy with the third period.

But I think our biggest mistake was not scoring on all our chances in the second. I think it could have been four or five with the breakaways and the other chances we had in the second. And credit to Matt Davis for holding them in there when we were really pushing in the second period.

But like you said, Denver has a championship pedigree. They're going to push and make it hard on you. They're going to come forward and they have elite players who made some elite plays.

But we knew over the entirety of the game, I thought we were the better squad. And in that regard we just believed in ourselves and kept doing what we do, and that's play Bronco hockey.

Q. What do you make of now advancing to your first, not only being in your first Frozen Four but now advancing to your first title game, and what this outcome does for your team and program?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: It does a lot. Obviously anytime you're doing program firsts I think that's a special thing. Getting here, program first; winning this thing, program first; winning the Penrose Cup, program first. We did a lot of things program firsts.

But I think this is a special group and a special group of young men. For the most part I think we have the best leader in college hockey and that's Tim Washe. He's just dragged this team forward with his will and his skill, his inclusiveness in the locker room. And I think that's been our secret sauce all year.

Q. I wanted to ask you about a guy like Alex Bump and how much of a well-rounded player he is because of his attention to detail defensively. Seemed like your forwards really defended hard tonight and he seemed to be one that was really involved there?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Great catch. Everybody looks for Alex with the puck, but we saw the same thing. His growth without the puck over the last two years has been his biggest growth.

He's always had deception, play-making ability, ability to

really make people miss. But what he's added in the last two years I think which has made him an absolute elite player is his compete. It's every single day.

In fact, he'll only go against Tim Washe for lots of -- when it's one-on-one drills in practice. He picks out our biggest, strongest, hardest guy to go against. And that's part of his maturation process and what's going to make him a National Hockey Leaguer.

Q. I know you're going to say you're always aggressive. But seemed to be a little more today. I don't know, was Denver playing five D? Did you feel there was something you could exploit there? Is that just par for the course for you guys?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: I would think it's par for the course. I don't want to give you a boring answer, but I told our guys to stay on the gas and attack.

That's why we were tied with Denver coming in as the leading goal-scoring teams in the country. Both teams are trying to attack. Both teams are trying to score.

We did know they were down a defenseman. That's an obvious thing. So make them work, put as much pressure on them as possible. I thought what we did, especially in the first two periods and the overtime was play the game with our feet.

We're a really good skating team and we can put pressure on people with our feet by carrying the puck. When we lose it forward we put a lot of pressure on their D to make clean breakouts. And I thought we had great sticks doing that as well.

Q. Obviously eerily similar finishes the last two times you played these guys. They flipped the script from the previous game, making a comeback this time. How big is a goal like that scoring quickly in an overtime period when you know you're just kind of getting back, used to being back on the ice after sitting for a little bit?

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Super similar as far as ending very quickly in that second overtime, and again some of it is just overtime, keep doing it right, keep doing it right, keep doing it right. And we got a little break on that goal. It wasn't a clean pass. Tipped off the stick right onto Owen. But we talked about being ready to win the game when the chance comes. We talked about that in between periods. I said, When it gets on your stick, be ready to win the game for us. And I think Owen Michaels did a great job of that, for sure.