

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

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St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Enterprise Center

## Western Michigan Broncos Coach Pat Ferschweiler Grant Slukynsky Robby Drazner

Finals Pregame Media Conference



**Q. Pat, if there's a difference you can put on -- coming in first and coming in second -- can you just imagine how big that gap is and how much of a motivator it is to get there and leave with the trophy tomorrow night?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Well, obviously winning is better. We've earned the right to be in this moment. We've earned the right to play for the championship. We're excited about that. Again, we're going to focus on being the best version of the Broncos we can and not worry about outcomes until after the game.

**Q. Grant, I feel like we've asked your brother a million times about his decision to come to Western Michigan. But from your side of things, the commitment over the summer, what was that process like and what drew you to Western Michigan?**

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: It was a late departure I guess in the portal period of college hockey. When our coach left Northern we decided to look elsewhere. The goal was for us to find a spot where we could play together.

We had a Zoom call with the coaching staff here at Western. I've said it a lot, but from the moment we hopped on that Zoom call we knew we wanted to come to Western, seeing Western being in the NCAA Tournament in the last few years. And we wanted to be part of that group that got this team over the hump. Our goal is to -- we're not satisfied yet. Our goal is to get the job done tomorrow night.

**Q. The Zoom call, what about it that drew you? Was it the energy? Was it the pitch? What exactly was the selling point?**

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: I would say it was a combination of a ton of things. Coach, first, he's full of energy. Just got a pro feeling from that call. And both of our goals is to ultimately play in the NHL. With Fersch having experience of being at the highest level of hockey there is, that was a big draw for us. And, like I said, we were stoked in from the moment we got off that call.

**Q. Grant, talk about where you grew up, what it was like?**

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: Warroad, Minnesota, small town. Only 1700 people. But a lot of college hockey players, and good amount of NHL players -- T.J. Oshie and Brock Nelson, to name a few. To be able to follow in their footsteps, it's pretty cool.

We have a wall back home of all the guys that have played Division I. And it's a pretty historic wall. So to be up there on that wall with them is certainly really cool. And we hope to add national champion to our names on that wall.

**Q. If I could get everybody's perspective up there, looking at that crowd yesterday, I mean, how loud it was, could you put a perspective around what this could mean to bring this back to Lawson and the Lawson Lunatics?**

ROBBY DRAZNER: Yeah, it would mean everything. You could just see the support we had from past alumni. We got a ton of alumni here. Lawson Lunatics, the students, made the trip here.

Just the overwhelming support that we have, and that's not just this weekend, but on a nightly basis dating back to our first home game, and they travel on the road, whenever we're on the road.

So there's a lot of buzz around Kalamazoo and we're going to do our best to bring it out there.

**Q. What was it like out there last night?**

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: It was awesome, it was so much fun. Especially after Michael scored that overtime goal,

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looking up, seeing all the support we had or have, it's a cool moment and we're really excited for tomorrow.

**Q. What was it like from the head coach's perspective?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: It's great. The support we get every day in this program is incredible, not just from the community but the university. I'm not sure if everyone knows, our athletic director sponsored the students. If you could make it down here he covered the ticket. Pretty awesome thing. I'm sure most athletic directors are not willing to do. But ours does.

He understands the importance of the support from our students. And certainly we're blessed with great alumni. A lot of them come to the event as well.

**Q. Have you gotten through all your texts?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: I'm a couple hundred short of getting through them. They seem to be building as fast as I can -- but we love them coming in.

**Q. I've never been to the Upper Peninsula. I know I'm not allowed to say "for anyone," but, Pat, or if anyone can answer this question, how does one journey from Kalamazoo to St. Louis? I imagine it's not an easy trip to make?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: We're in the lower peninsula. It's real easy journey to make -- just take the highway to Chicago and 55 down.

We're two hours to Chicago, two hours to Detroit, right in the middle, southwest Michigan.

**Q. Speaking of alumni, just that era you played, you look down the roster, there's three current NCAA Division I head coaches. There's NHL executives. There's assistant coaches. You name it, they're all here for the most part. How do you explain that from your time? Was that Bill Wilkinson's?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: What I think it was, Coach Wilkinson was a long-time coach at Western Michigan and a legendary figure in college hockey. And we had Mike Schafer there as an assistant, who is now just a retired legendary Cornell coach.

What those guys did, what I think we're trying to do here now, is make sure that everyone loves the game. When you love the game, you want to stay in it longer. That's what we've all found is if you can truly find something you love and make it your job, this is pretty great. We've been

lucky enough -- a lot of us, myself included, alumni in that era -- have found a home in hockey.

**Q. Pat, Scott (indiscernible) was talking to us at the end of his season, talking about the importance of goaltending what it can do for a program -- also said it can make a coach look pretty darned good. He brought up your team. He could have brought up his own. But he brought up your team as an example what goaltending can do. How big has that been on your run here. We've paid a lot of attention to Hampton, but Cameron has been pretty good too?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Cameron Rowe is 15-2 this year. He's had an exceptional season. Let's not forget that as well. Not only his play, but his inclusiveness of Hampton has been important to our success overall as a team the entire year.

I think there's been a lot of good play in front of those goaltenders as well. Our defensive core has done a great job denying access to them. When it has broken down they've been there. It's certainly something we feel comfortable with either guy playing. We know they'll be there when we need them.

**Q. Who runs the music in the room, by the way?**

ROBBY DRAZNER: It's usually Tim Washe.

PAT FERSCHWEILER: I will tell you, at the start of the year I said this team has a chance. This is the best music of any college team I've ever been around. Fantastic.

**Q. What do we have, what genre?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Country, rock, classic rock. The coaches enjoy it. We don't always get to say that. It's pretty great.

**Q. Follow-up to that, Hampton, a 19-year-old freshman -- I know it's these guys' first Frozen Four -- but he's a 19-year-old freshman goalie on that stage. Didn't always see a lot of action there for a couple of periods, but what stood out to you about his performance, first time in the Frozen Four last night?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: What stands out every time Hampton plays is his calm. You're right, they didn't have many shots early on, made a push in the third and got a couple of goals.

But Hampton doesn't change. He has that belief in himself from his preparation. He doesn't approach the game like a young guy. He prepares every day. He reminds me of all

the NHLers I was around. He's preparing for success every day. And it certainly comes up at the biggest moments.

**Q. Grant, can you describe what a perfect Western Michigan game looks like to win the championship tomorrow? Is there some elements of that you can give us if things go your way and you're playing the way you want to play what that game is going to look like?**

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: For sure. I would say there's no such thing as a perfect game, but us playing to the best of our ability would be us just playing north. So we preach that.

What that is is that's getting the puck to the other opponent's end as quick as possible, not spending a ton of time around zone. Defending quickly. Being hard on their top players.

And they have a big goalie, so getting pucks and bodies and traffic to the net. In these tight playoff games, sometimes the goals aren't the prettiest. We had some nice shots last night. But just getting pucks to the net when possible and finishing our chances.

ROBBY DRAZNER: I'd say the same thing, just sticking to our game plan. The coaches put a really good game plan in place for us every night. Just following that. Doesn't matter who we play as long as we stick to what makes us successful. And, like Grant said, that's going north, making them defend and just transitioning pucks and get shots on that.

**Q. What are your plans for the rest of the day? Is there anything you really want to do that you haven't been able to do while you've been in St. Louis?**

ROBBY DRAZNER: I mean, just kind of lay low. I know we're going to go back to the hotel, grab some lunch. Some guys might go for a little walk or kind of check out. We're right by Busch Stadium, so maybe take a walk down there, take a walk by the river.

But nothing really changes. Just another day we get to rest and just prepare for tomorrow.

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: Yeah, just grab some lunch. Probably throw the Masters on, just enjoy it.

**Q. Who are you rooting for?**

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: Rory McIlroy. I hope he gets a grand slam.

**Q. You're not going up in the Arch. What are you doing today?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Not going in the Arch. I'm lucky enough, my wife and daughter are here, and so we'll spend some time together.

**Q. Grant, you played in the Minnesota state high school tournament, which is probably the best sports tournament in high school. Are your nerves and excitement the same here in the Frozen Four?**

GRANT SLUKYNSKY: Yeah, I would say that's a good comparable. Growing up, you want to play in the Minnesota state high school tournament. My senior year we were fortunate enough to be able to do that.

Growing up, watching the Frozen Four in April, it was a goal of ours, my brother and I, to be able to be on this stage one day. And to be here, that's a good comparable, the Minnesota state tournament to here. I think it was a good experience to go through that to kind of know what to expect with the NHL rink, some of the NHL amenities. It's certainly cool to be here.

**Q. Pat, I know you haven't probably had a ton of time to scout BU, but what do they show you, and are there any comps you can make, is there a team that maybe you played in the NCAA that you played in the nonconference that looks similar?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: I prescouted BU for years. They were called the Boston Bruins. And their style of play is exactly what Boston did. Certainly Coach Pandolfo has brought that style down. Somewhat unique to college. It's pretty popular in the NHL. But there's a lot of similarities there.

So we certainly have a good idea what they're trying to accomplish. We're going to try -- we'll put points of emphasis on what we try to do every day without trying to change our style of play at all.

**Q. Robby, we've talked a lot about Hampton, but tell us about his older brother, what kind of addition he's been to the Broncos and the impact he's made on you guys this year.**

ROBBY DRAZNER: Grant's been awesome. He's a pro's pro. He leads every day through his actions. He does everything right. Last guy off the ice every practice. He's earned everything he's got. Excited to see the success that he has here at Western.

**Q. Pat, I'm curious if there was a moment this season where you knew this team could get to this moment, not think necessarily where it really crystallized, but you could be in the Frozen Four on the doorstep of a national championship?**

PAT FERSCHWEILER: Honestly, uniquely, it was in a loss to Boston College early in the season. And we went out there, number one team in the country at the time. Some overwhelming forwards with Ryan Leonard and Perreault, and we completed really well. We lost a heartbreaking game that day, 47 seconds to lose. But I knew at that point we could compete with anyone.

I think the belief in our players, even though we lost -- and maybe I'm wrong -- I know the compete was there and we believed we could have won that game, and I think that gave us belief for the rest of the year.

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