

NCAA Men's Frozen Four

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St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Enterprise Center

Tim Troville

Chad Tolliver

Steve Metcalf

Steve Chapman

Scott Sandelin

State of the Game Press Conference



been. I guess when we get to the end of the year we'll have some more data on that.

I just remember last year the growth and the attendance and viewership that we had across college hockey, certainly at the end of the year when you see college hockey players jump into the NHL and perform right away, it just shows you how strong our game is.

And it's obviously great to be here. Thanks to all the St. Louis folks.

Great time of year when you're crowning a champion. That's just always fun to be around.

STEVE CHAPMAN: I'll start by saying, Tim said it, echoing, this was an incredible group effort here in St. Louis. Thanks to this guy right here, maybe we can tell the story of how we got here (referring to Steve Metcalf).

But we're unbelievably proud to host this event. I know this is the State of College Hockey but it's really the state of hockey itself and the growth of the game and what we've seen here locally in our youth hockey, what we've seen with our team and the fan base and the growth of it itself.

As it pertains to college hockey, we're pretty proud. We now have a D-I team here in St. Louis with Lindenwood that we're proud of and we have another university that's talking about going D-I. So we see the growth expanding quite a bit.

I do have to mention this, because my son plays it, I think this goes all the way up, but it even extends down into ACHA hockey, which is also being played at universities around the country. The growth of the game is just incredible right now.

But I would be remiss not to say that it's just wonderful to sit here and look out because this has been an effort that we've been chasing for about 10 years to host this event here in St. Louis. And we're really proud to have it.

STEVE METCALF: Chappy, I think Steve Chapman, instrumental in getting the Frozen Four here. And I

MODERATOR: With us we have Tim Troville, the chair of the Division I Ice Hockey Committee, senior associate AD at Harvard; Scott Sandelin, a member of the men's Ice Hockey Committee, head coach Minnesota Duluth; Steve Metcalf, the commissioner of Hockey East and the chair of the Hockey Commissioners Association; and pleased to have a member of our host group, the St. Louis Blues, Steve Chapman, executive vice president of the Blues.

TIM TROVILLE: The Frozen Four is a celebration of college hockey, and we are excited and happy to be here in St. Louis. I have to ensure I give thanks to the University of Vermont, been a great host; St. Louis Sports Commission; the Enterprise Center; and the St. Louis Blues.

This has been an exciting tournament thus far, and we're looking forward to tomorrow's evening national championship game between Western Michigan and Boston University to culminate a great championship season for us.

SCOTT SANDELIN: It's a great time of the year when you're playing. It's two great games yesterday. Certainly excited to see tomorrow's game. Obviously there's a lot going on in our world.

But just happy to be part of the committee. Obviously would love to be in the position the two teams are in tomorrow, but hopefully that's something down the road. But just have enjoyed the committee and being a part of it and looking forward to a great game tomorrow.

STEVE METCALF: I think the state of college hockey is very healthy, very vibrant, perhaps as strong as it's ever



remember I guess many conversations over the years at Frozen Fours but particularly in 2019, Jeff Schulman, Chris Roseman, Steve Chapman and I we had a beef on weck in Buffalo and shortly after that this was a site that was picked. So beef on weck in Buffalo made this happen.

Q. I'll jump in with the House versus NCAA discussion. Can people explain where we are today? Who is running the point from the college hockey side? I know that this is a national issue. This is an NCAA thing, but who is running the point? I know no coach seems happy with it. I guess my question is where are we and where do you see it going soon?

MODERATOR: Obviously it's an ongoing issue. It's going to be a couple weeks before we know more.

STEVE METCALF: I think we're all waiting for the judge to make the final determination. I think college hockey, like many other sports, wished they had more say in kind of getting here.

I know something that wasn't well received amongst most of the coaches was the roster limits. So now there's rumors about maybe that's going to get phased in.

But I don't think any of us know any more than you've read, Jimmy, or any of us have read, the same stuff. We're just waiting in limbo to see what's going to happen and if those limits are going to get phased in and kind of really what the details and parameters are of the decision, the settlement she makes.

TIM TROVILLE: I'd add what I think is unique about college hockey, we have many different levels of membership. We have Division III institutions playing Division I hockey. We have non-scholarship institutions participating. If I just look at the league that I represent, the ECAC, we have six Ivy hockey-playing schools plus six ECAC hockey-playing schools. Some of those Division I out of the Patriot League, and some out of the Liberty League in Division III.

I think what will happen we'll all make that determination on campuses, what's best for our campuses.

But I think that's what's great about college hockey and the uniqueness that we can have so many different levels of our membership participating at the Division I level.

And Chappy mentioned Lindenwood which we're proud of. And we have other school recently joining, whether it's LIU or Stonehill, St. Thomas, Augustana. We look at Arizona State, what they've done so quickly.

And a great example is Penn State making their first tournament and being here in the national semifinals.

That's what we think is great about college hockey. And I think we'll just have to wait to see how this shakes out.

Q. Maybe Tim or Steve or Scott, on another topic that's come up, it's the CHL eligibility issue. Where do you see this going? And where are we at now? How do you see how this unfolds going into next season? I know it's a convoluted question, but is there going to be a wild west period when it comes to trying to attract some of the talent in recruiting, some of the talent going into next year and future years?

TIM TROVILLE: Well, I think I would defer to Coach Sandelin on roster construction, recruiting. But from the administration level of what I represent, I think we've been very adaptable in the NCAA and as a member institution.

As I mentioned we have many institutions that are different levels, different types -- private, public, how they see things.

When these rulings or rule changes come about, we look on our campuses to see how that will affect what we're trying to do. But as far as roster construction, recruiting, I think Scott Sandelin is the best person to answer that.

SCOTT SANDELIN: I think we need time with that, too. I really do. I think there's still a lot of things that need to get figured out on some issues. Obviously the PHP is going to have conversations about the CBA and all the new things that are there.

Again, to me it's not any different -- it's like an extension of the portal. It's a bigger player pool. And everyone is going to use it the way they feel they need to use it.

But it's more of a kind of wait and see here, too, because there's going to be a lot of new players coming into college hockey that maybe for some it's going to be an adjustment just like any freshman. They're just older.

I do think maybe as we go you're going to see maybe hopefully younger players playing, not just the over-aged kids or older players. I think it's more about let's see how it goes this year. And give it a couple of years and see where it takes us.

STEVE METCALF: I think it's going to be a situation where the hockey ecosystem is going to take a little time, like Scott said, to reset. I do think college hockey is going to be stronger as we come out of this.

And right now I think the NHL teams are comprised of approximately one-third, if I remember correctly -- one-third, right -- of hockey players, that number will increase dramatically. But it's going to take some time because it's so new and no CHL player has got to college and played yet.

Q. Given what happened in Manchester this year with ice issues and the peg issues and net issues and also similarly in Albany a few years ago there were issues with the scoreboard and game clock -- and those are venues that don't host hockey regularly -- does the committee do walk-throughs with the sites that are hosting regionals? Or is there any kind of way to catch these issues in advance for those sites that are not host to hockey teams anymore?

TIM TROVILLE: I was the site representative in Manchester. I'll say I think there's a bit of misreporting around that. That was a very unique hockey issue that could have happened in any building, including mine in Cambridge, where we're trying to set a peg and how the piping system works and that sort of thing.

That crew in Manchester did a fantastic job to rectify the situation. And after that I really thought it was a non-story.

But to answer your question, we do. We do site walk-throughs and we scrutinize bids and look at where we're going to bring these regionals to.

And we take the play on the ice very seriously and want that to settle games with pucks and goals and sticks on the ice and not have any outside factors there.

For the most part, I think we do a really good job of providing that equitable experience. I appreciate the question about Manchester. I think they did a great job. Really, it was a fluke issue that could have happened in any building.

Q. Tim, where are we in the cycle? I know last time Chicago/Washington was announced, it was two. It's usually four. Do we have another two or four coming? Where are we in that whole mix with that?

TIM TROVILLE: I would defer to -- I wish Chad Tolliver was sitting next to me. So we do have the next two awarded.

MODERATOR: Here comes Chad.

CHAD TOLLIVER: The bid cycle, the next will be coming up. We're out through '28. So internally the national staff is still kind of reviewing what's the best length for the next

bid cycle.

I would expect it to be rolled out in the next year to 18 months. We'll get that out and start looking for '29, '30 -- and hopefully we'll get an extra year in there to build out. I would hope we'd get three, but it's still TBD at this moment.

MODERATOR: For those who don't know Chad. That's Chad Tolliver. He's the director of the Division I Men's Ice Hockey Championship for the national office in Indianapolis. Been at it for a while. In 2013, Chad started getting involved with us. I think many of you do know him.

Q. It follows on Adam's question. Tim, maybe this is a Chad question, too, do you feel like this is satisfaction in the cities that are bidding? I'm not talking maybe from a Frozen Four but a regional standpoint. I know that's always been kind of a question of who's bidding where and are there enough bids coming from west of the Mississippi River. I guess we just went through awarding, but are you getting enough cities at this point interested?

TIM TROVILLE: Yeah, I think so. And last year we had a regional in Maryland Heights. We're always looking to solicit bids for regionals. And certainly there's more eastern cities interested than maybe some in the West. We're doing a lot of active outreach to try to get some of those cities and towns to bid.

We want to grow college hockey, and we want to get it into places where people can access it. I've said this is why having the Frozen Four here in a centrally located St. Louis is really fantastic. It's easily accessible.

And I think we look at the same for the regionals. How can we provide a good experience, particularly think about it from a geography standpoint?

But we'll actively solicit to try to get more western cities and arenas to bid on it.

MODERATOR: Maryland Heights, Chappy, music to your ears, Centene is where the Blues tried hard to get it up and going. You talk about hockey just in general, you've hosted -- I know you hosted the USA Hockey Disabled Festival, you've hoisted the Women's National Team Rivalry Series. You mentioned the ACHA, and there's 500 collegiate club teams. Everyone probably knows that, and a big impact on hockey. Must make you smile to see that come to life and all the things you brought to the city?

STEVE CHAPMAN: I heard the question. We might need more beef on weck pretty soon.

It is. It's a great question because if you really want the sport to grow -- and the markets it regularly goes to are outstanding. I've been to all of them. And that's important. But if you really want the sport to grow, we do believe that you need to find markets where you have a foothold, like St. Louis, markets that have put their best foot forward in trying to attract some of these events.

I think when you do that, again, I'm just expressing this because it shows the growth of the game. I've been in hockey now for 30-plus years. Came up through the minor leagues. And my son plays hockey at the University of Arkansas. And they're good. That's incredible. And it's incredible about the growth of hockey and where it's going.

When you watch these games and you see the energy that comes with it and you see the 10,000-plus people who religiously follow this event around, and you see a beautiful ice facility in Maryland Heights, Missouri that is attracting these type of events, to me it brings a smile to my face for St. Louis, but it brings a smile to my face for college hockey and, more importantly, everybody at this table and in this room, the game. We owe the game and we owe to grow it the best we can and it is, it's very gratifying.

Q. Tim, Sandy Or Steve, speaking of Centene, that was a regional that had a little smaller capacity than normal. Is that something you would consider more of to get into different buildings, different markets? Thinking of a lot of UHL buildings might be in a capacity that might be similar to that but haven't necessarily been in some of the bidding processes because of capacity. What's the flexibility there, I guess, now and going forward?

TIM TROVILLE: I think that's a really good question. Yeah, we would like to bring the regional to non-traditional cities that bid for it.

I think we look at the math and capacities and that sort of thing. Who could have predicted Michigan and Michigan State would see each other in Maryland Heights a year ago? So that's pretty fantastic.

But we've even talked about the ability for some of our better campus sites to be able to host. But from a committee standpoint and from our membership standpoint, we really want to keep the integrity of the four-team regional. So when we're looking at buildings we have to make sure there's locker rooms that we can use, nearby hotels -- there's a bunch of things that go into that. But in general we're open to bids from nontraditional sites.

MODERATOR: Big year for retiring coaches that have been around for a long time. Coach Sandelin, between

Bob Daniels and Jeff Jackson and Mike Schafer, Brian Riley -- I'm not trying to retire you here, by the way, but -- we haven't had a year, I can't remember a year where this many coaches have had that long of a tenure have gone. Any thoughts on that?

SCOTT SANDELIN: Yeah, I do know them, but great people. Obviously our game's losing some great coaches, but more importantly great people that have done a lot. Certainly Schafe, having been on the committee before, I think we were all pulling for him to get back here in his last year.

STEVE METCALF: I wasn't.

SCOTT SANDELIN: I know you weren't. (Laughter). Well, some people were, all right?

But just good people. That's the beauty of this game. Me, too, being fortunate to come in when I did and learn from even older coaches, the Jeff Sauers and Mike Sertich, those guys, Rick Comley -- learn a lot of things.

To see those guys obviously over the years, become good friends with them and certainly respect their careers and what they've done for the game.

Going to miss those guys but also ushers in new coaches and a new era of younger coaches and I don't know if Casey (phonetic) is that young, but just -- I can joke with him -- but just kind of a unique year where we saw those guys getting out, and obviously Wayne recently, too.

Q. Scott, when you're out there on the recruiting market and NIL comes up, how do you address it as a coach? A couple years ago it felt like the sky was falling in college hockey; oh, the big schools would have such an advantage. And we don't have big schools here necessarily always representing. Where do you feel this is and how much as you're out there as a coach do you hear it being brought up as an issue?

SCOTT SANDELIN: My assistants hear it a lot -- a lot of it you don't know what is being paid. There's a lot of rumors and a lot of numbers being thrown around. Who knows what's fact or not? But obviously it's out there and it's part of what we are growing into.

So, again, we're probably not -- again, we're not a school that might have as much as another school. So the way we address it is, when we're dealing with recruits and kids, this is what we have to offer you. This is what we could potentially give you. And that's the best we can do.

But it does come up a lot with conversations with agents -- what do you have? So it's changed a lot.

But that's really all I can say, we can only do what we can do. Other schools can do what they can do. Wherever that lands with a recruit, that's their choice.

Q. Going back to the CHL eligibility, what do you make of the talk there actually being a cap placed on the number of international players on rosters to promote more -- so Americans do not lose their spots? What is the reaction to that? There's been talk of a cap. And do you foresee that college hockey might become an 18 -- the CHL might be reduced to an 18-and-younger or a 17-and-younger kind of league when it comes to elite players?

SCOTT SANDELIN: I'm going to go back to what I said earlier. Time will tell where this goes.

STEVE METCALF: I think when you say cap, my immediate reaction is that's the opposite of the direction we're going in, restriction and capping anything. So I would say that just doesn't seem likely to me.

College hockey coaches and college hockey is interested in getting the best players they can from wherever they're from.

Q. Steve, I appreciate your answer, but that's not what I've been told from, be it Glenn Fefferan of USHL or Pat Kelleher, who want to promote making sure that the roster spots for American players are still open at the college level. So I understand your point of view. This is what I've been told from my point of view. How do you respond to that?

MODERATOR: Just to clarify, I'm guessing that was meant at a federal level, not an NCAA thing. The NCAA wouldn't have, assumably, wouldn't have any say. It's the federal government. I can't imagine that would be just for one sport.

The concept was making sure that American citizens had access to collegiate sports. I think it was further on the scholarship side, not necessarily roster sides. That's been bantered around, I don't know how widely, which again would be kind of out of the hands of anyone up here.

STEVE METCALF: I mean, I understand their position.

Q. Steve Chapman, we've seen certain markets grow in terms of player development over the years. Arizona is one now where there's more college and NHL players coming from Arizona. St. Louis, this area

was kind of the first one, it felt like, that was a newer market that, going back a few decades ago, kind of exploded in terms of player development. What do you attribute that to? What's special in this market that contributed to more development of hiring players?

STEVE CHAPMAN: Start with St. Louis Blues alumni. Many players have come to play in St. Louis and have chosen to stay. It's a great place to live and raise a family. In doing that, I think they've rapidly accelerated the growth of what I'd call youth hockey and AAA hockey and that level of hockey in this region. And it's grown and grown.

And I'll tell you, I grew up out east. I moved here 10 years ago. To tell you -- my son was at the time was in middle school. And I was shocked at how good the youth hockey organizations and everything else that were in St. Louis when I got here.

And we doubled down. I think myself and Randy Girsch, Chris Zimmerman, several of us doubled down on the Blues' investment, involvement in youth hockey, because I think everywhere I've been -- like I said, after spending so long, I was in Atlanta and saw the Thrashers. And I've seen Dallas and what they've done with building local youth hockey rinks and investing. It's not something that happens overnight. It's something that happens over time.

And when you invest in it at that level, it just grows and grows, which is why I think it's so important, the youth hockey, the ACHA, college hockey, all the way up to the pros.

It is a great game. And to be honest with you, I think it's the greatest of games. And I think when people get exposed to it, they just become enamored with it, and over time, it strengthens, strengthens, strengthens. But you have to have the investment -- I sound like I'm preaching when I say this, but I just believe in it. You have to love the game more than you love anything else about it and believe in what it can do and what it does for the kids that play it, boys, girls, young men, young women, all the way up to -- look, it's one of the few sports that old people are playing in beer league games.

Barret Jackman and I joke all the time: All roads lead to beer league. Doesn't matter whether you played in the show or whether you stopped at AA hockey. But it's that love of the game, the love of the camaraderie that it brings and, honestly, the love of the locker room, because I think once you've walked out of your last official locker room, I kind of personally believe you spend the rest of your life trying to figure out how to get back in one.

So when you're talking about growth of markets, it starts with the passion of fans and people like this and people like -- I look at our youth hockey administrators and coaches and all these folks, they're doing this, hopefully, selflessly. They're doing it because they know what the game brought to them and what they want to give back.

And I think that's one of the things that is-- I don't want to say it's unique because I've played other sports and other sports have -- but it's so deeply ingrained in the hockey community that, again, I go back to this. In 1992 I was the assistant general manager of the Birmingham Bulls. Birmingham, Alabama, New Jersey Devils affiliate. We were the southernmost professional hockey team in the entire United States of America.

Now my son plays ACHA hockey at the University of Arkansas. That's incredible. I believe it's just going to keep growing with the passion you guys have, the people at this table and the people in this room have.

So the markets matter, but to me it's the game and what people put into it.

TIM TROVILLE: If I could add on that, the role of USA Hockey in that. I was a college baseball player at Northeastern that didn't skate very well. I have two boys, 11 and nine, that are both playing AAA hockey in the Boston area. And I have a Level 2 certification from USA Hockey in coaching. That's a baseball player that now just loves this sport and I've dedicated my life to it.

So I think without the partnership of USA Hockey and their development model, and as Chappy said, getting hockey into nontraditional markets, we couldn't do that without a national organization like USA Hockey training coaches and then creating learn-to-skate and development programs, and that's why American hockey is where it is right now.

It's that foresight to get children that don't typically play hockey in skates and on ice and give them access and now we're seeing some of the results of that, and it was mentioned St. Louis and Arizona and now Arkansas and places that you wouldn't have thought that would have happened. So I just wanted to make sure that we acknowledge USA Hockey and their role in that.

MODERATOR: Who is dropping the puck tomorrow night? St. Louis Blues alum?

STEVE CHAPMAN: Walt.

Q. When I talk to coaches, the bigger concern than NIL is just the unlimited transfer situation these days. It

seems to be the bigger problem. Are we all just kind of at the mercy? Is there anything anybody can do in terms of tweaking the rules, or are we just all sitting back at the whim of the Supreme Court of the United States essentially at this point?

SCOTT SANDELIN: It feels like it.

Q. Is there anything anyone's trying to do? Nothing on the rules?

SCOTT SANDELIN: I don't know what we can do. Unfortunately.

STEVE METCALF: Like the horse is out of the barn.

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