

BOSTON COLLEGE
NORTH DAKOTA

THE FROZEN FOUR

MICHIGAN
NOTRE DAME

“We’re here for one reason —

win the national championship,” Kevin Porter said. The senior forward and captain for No. 1 Michigan leads the country in goals (33), power-play goals (15), points (62) and points per game (1.48). He is the overwhelming favorite to win the Hobey Baker Award on Friday as national player of the year. After the Frozen Four, the next time you’ll see Porter in Denver, he’ll probably be in a Phoenix Coyotes sweater. He was selected by Phoenix in the fourth round (119th overall) of the 2004 NHL draft. *John Leyba, The Denver Post*

Plus-33

Porter’s plus-minus rating, highest nationally among the country’s top 50 scorers.

Boston College vs. North Dakota

4 P.M. TODAY | TV: ESPN2

BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES

Records: 23-11-8, 11-9-7 in Hockey East
Coach: Jerry York, 14th season with Eagles

NCAA appearances: 28

Trips to Frozen Four: 21

NCAA titles: Two (1949, 2001)

How they got here: Finished fourth in Hockey East regular season, first in HE playoffs. In the Northeast Regional, beat Minnesota 5-2 and Miami 4-3 (OT).

NORTH DAKOTA FIGHTING SIOUX

Records: 28-10-4, 18-7-3 in WCHA
Coach: Dave Hakstol, third season

NCAA appearances: 23

Trips to Frozen Four: 18

NCAA titles: Seven (1959, 1963, 1980, 1982, 1987, 1997, 2000)

How they got here: Second in Western Collegiate Hockey Association regular season, third in WCHA playoffs. In the Midwest Regional, beat Princeton 5-1 and Wisconsin 3-2 (OT).

Offense

The Eagles will likely win this game if it becomes a high-scoring affair. While the Fighting Sioux have two exceptional scorers in juniors T.J. Oshie and Ryan Duncan, they are typically limited to a two-line attack and focus on playing outstanding defense in front of senior goaltender J.P. Lamoureux. This is a classic matchup between a potent offense (BC, ranked No. 3 nationally) and a stingy defense (North Dakota, ranked No. 1).

Defense

To get to the Sioux net, you often have to go through huge defenseman Joe Finley, who is to college hockey what Boston Bruins captain Zdeno Chara is to the NHL. The intimidating Finley is 6-foot-7 and 245 pounds. After him, the Sioux defenders are small but quick. BC’s top six defensemen have combined for just 16 goals, but it is an experienced group — each having played at least 40 of 42 games. They know how to play in front of freshman goaltender John Muse.

Special teams

The Sioux are known to take too many penalties, averaging 18.3 minutes in the box. But they probably haven’t played against a better power play than what the Eagles will throw at them, led by diminutive forward Nathan Gerbe, who has nine power-play goals. However, BC has the country’s 31st-ranked penalty killing unit, so this might be even.

What they’re saying

“The Boston College-North Dakota rivalry is great for college hockey. You have a team from the West and a team from the East and they always seem to be in the mix at the end of the year. It’s great for the game and exciting for the fans.” — *North Dakota goalie J.P. Lamoureux*

Prediction

Denver Post staff writer Mike Chambers picks Boston College

Game-day comparisons (National ranking in parentheses)

Boston College		North Dakota
3.57 (3)	Goals per game	3.05 (16)
2.36 (14)	Goals allowed	1.76 (1)
Plus-1.21 (4)	Scoring margin	Plus-1.29 (3)
15.9 (17)	PIMs	18.3 (6)
21.7 (7)	Power-play pct.	19.1 (17)
83.9 (31)	Penalty-kill pct.	87.4 (7)
Won 7	Streak	Won 3

Michigan vs. Notre Dame

7 P.M. TODAY | TV: ESPN2

MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

Records: 33-5-4, 20-4-4 in CCHA
Coach: Red Berenson, 24th season

NCAA appearances: 31; **Trips to Frozen Four:** 23

NCAA titles: Nine (1948, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1955, 1956, 1964, 1996, 1998)

How they got here: First in Central Collegiate Hockey Association regular season and CCHA playoffs. In the East Regional, beat Niagara 5-1 and Clarkson 2-0.

NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

Records: 26-15-4, 15-9-4 in CCHA
Coach: Jeff Jackson, third season

NCAA appearances: Three

Trips to Frozen Four: First

NCAA titles: None

How they got here: Fourth in Central Collegiate Hockey Association regular season and CCHA playoffs. In the West Regional, beat New Hampshire 7-3 and Michigan State 3-1.

Offense

Michigan’s No. 2-ranked offense features the country’s most dangerous line in center Kevin Porter and right winger Chad Kolarik (who have combined for 61 goals and 116 points). If you stop them, you have a chance. The Fighting Irish didn’t do that in January, when they lost 3-2 and 5-1 at Michigan. Porter and Kolarik combined for three goals to sweep the series. Given that Notre Dame lost its leading scorer, Erik Condra (knee surgery), a month ago, Michigan has a big edge.

Defense

Both teams have junior goaltenders, but Michigan’s Billy Sauer has been a regular since he was a freshman and is having a career-best season with 30 wins (including a 12-game win streak) and four shutouts. This is Jordan Pearce’s first season as the starter for the Irish, and he went 22-14-4 with two shutouts. And in three fewer games than Notre Dame, Michigan has allowed eight fewer goals. Another edge for the Wolverines.

Special teams

Notre Dame is all over the map with a weak 15.4 percent power-play scoring and an excellent 89.6 percent penalty kill, which ranks second in the nation. Porter (15 power-play goals) and Kolarik (four short-handed goals) have paced the Wolverines, who are stable in both situations, at 20.5 percent power play and 86.9 on PK.

What they’re saying

“All four lines for Michigan are very talented. They just make plays when there aren’t plays being made, so you just have to be aware of where they are, and where other guys are without the puck.” — *Notre Dame goalie Jordan Pearce*

Prediction

Chambers picks Michigan

